

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



November 12, 2020

Walla Walla: Today we received confirmation that an employee, at the Walla Walla Veterans Home, was diagnosed with COVID-19, the employee is self-isolated at home.

The employee, who does not provide direct resident care, was originally identified using a Point of Care Rapid Test machine produced by BD Veritor. Because of the potential for false positives, the employee was re-swabbed and a PCR test was sent to a local lab.

While waiting for confirmation of the positive test, the Walla Walla Veterans Home proceeded with all regular precautions for any positive staff or resident. Residents in the affected houses are being proactively tested and all staff will be regularly tested according to CMS guidelines based on the positivity rate in Walla Walla County. The Home has also performed additional environmental cleaning.

We are working closely with the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health and following guidance from the CDC, CMS and our State Department of Health to ensure we are taking every possible precaution.

The Walla Walla Veterans Home will continue enhanced surveillance, including 4-hour symptom and temperature checks, for residents in the affected areas for the next 14 days. We will also follow any additional guidance from the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health with regard to testing.

The employee was wearing appropriate PPE while at work, including a medical procedure mask and eye protection throughout their day. All staff working in resident areas of our State Veterans Homes are wearing medical procedure masks and eye protection. We are asking all staff to pay close attention to whether they have any symptoms, including the presence of a fever.

As part of our ongoing screening process, all staff are screened upon arrival at work each day. This process includes a series of questions around whether symptoms are present and a temperature check. In addition, staff will take their temperature at least twice a day and are also asked to report any symptoms that occur after coming to work.

The Walla Walla Veterans Home, is following guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service, which requires regular testing of all long-term care facility staff. This may result in the identification of asymptomatic carriers, but is an important tool in defending against COVID-19.

We are notifying residents, staff and family representatives via email or letter and a post

to the website. We have informed employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but we will maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In an effort to provide information as quickly and accurately as possible, we have developed a website to provide information to families and resident representatives, <https://www.dva.wa.gov/covid> Media inquiries should be addressed to heidia@dva.wa.gov.

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